

Message Text

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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 3841

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC, MOPS, PINS, PINT, ET
SUBJ: OVERVIEW OF PROVINCES I - NORTH

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 0163 (NOTAL), B. ADDIS ABABA 3534 (NOTAL)
C. ADDIS ABABA A-061 (NOTAL)

1. REF (A) SUMMARIZED DISTURBANCES AND DISSIDENCE IN COUN-
TRYSIDE AS OF JANUARY 1977. THIS IS FIRST OF FOUR-PART CABLE
REPORTING PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENTS JANUARY THROUGH JUNE 1977.

A. ERITREA - INSURGENT ACTIVITY INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY
WITH INSURGENT VICTORIES AT NACFA, OM HAGER, KARORA, TESSENEY,
AFABET AND ELABERET DURING REPORTING PERIOD. INSURGENT GAINS
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IN SAHEL DISTRICT AND WESTERN ERITREA HAVE NOT YET BEEN CHAL-
LENGED BY EPMG GROUND FORCES. RUMOR 2ND DIVISION MORALE
PROBLEMS IN ASMARA DURING FEB. AND MARCH APPEAR ABATED FOR
MOMENT, BUT DIVISION HAS MAINTAINED DEFENSIVE POSITION
THROUGHOUT PERIOD WITH NO MAJOR EFFORT TO DISLODGE GUER-
RILLAS. SPECULATION OF LAST MARCH BY ASMARA CONSULATE
THAT EPMG MILITARY CONSOLIDATING ITSELF INTO MAJOR DE-

FENSIBLE TOWNS SEEMS TO BE ACCURATE, BUT MORE BY DURESS THAN BY CHOICE. CONVOYS ALONG MASSAWA-ASARA ROAD HAVE BEEN DISRUPTED ON OCCASION, BUT WITH NO MAJOR IMPACT ON ASMARA SITUATION, WHICH NO DOUBT REFLECTS BOTH EPMG CAPABILITIES AND INSURGENT WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW ESSENTIAL GOODS TO REACH ERITREAN POPULATION (APPROX 170,000) OF ASMARA. WHILE ASSAB PORT FACILITIES AND ROAD INTO WOLLO PROVINCE HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED ANY SIGNIFICANT DISRUPTIONS, INSURGENT ATTACK ON AGIP POL STORAGE TANKS IN ASSAB IN APRIL COULD BE PRECURSOR OF INCREASED ACTIVITY, PARTICULARLY IF ADDIS-DJIBOUTI RAILROAD REMAINS CLOSED. REPAIR REPORTED RECENT ATTEMPTS BY ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT (ELF) ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT-POPULAR LIBERATION FORCE (ELF-PLF), AND ERITREAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT (EPLF) TO REACH SOME FORM OF POLITICAL UNITY, WITH LITTLE APPARENT SUCCESS. BATTLEFIELD COOPERATION BETWEEN ELF AND EPLF APPEARS TO BE CONTINUING, HOWEVER, AND NEITHER GROUP SEEMS WILLING TO NEGOTIATE WITH EPMG WITHOUT PARTICIPATION OF OTHER. ALL THREE GROUPS UNWILLING TO NEGOTIATE FOR ANYTHING LESS THAN INDEPENDENCE, AND HAVE STATED THIS PRECONDITION FOR ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH EPMG. WHILE RUMORS OF SOVIET EFFORTS TO BRING MARXIST EPLF AND MENGISTU REGIME TOGETHER FOR TALKS CONSISTENT WITH PREVIOUSLY ALLEGED EPMG SECRET ATTEMPTS TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH IDEOLOGICALLY COMPATIBLE EPLF, EMBASSY
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UNAWARE OF ANY PROGRESS.

B. TIGRE - LAST NON-ETHIOPIAN HOSTAGES (BRITISH VETERINARIAN, HIS WIFE, AND TWO CHILDREN), RELEASED BY TIGRE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT (TPLF) IN JANUARY. MAJOR TIGRE TOWNS, WHICH CONTROLLED BY EPMG, HAVE BEEN SURPRISINGLY QUIET PAST 3-4 MONTHS, AND THERE RELATIVELY FEW REPORTS OF INSURGENT ACTIVITIES SINCE JANUARY. EAST-WEST ROAD MOVEMENTS CONTINUED TO BE DIFFICULT DUE TO HIT-AND-RUN ATTACKS, BUT MAJOR NORTH-SOUTH ROAD TO MAKELLE REMAINED OPEN AND IN MAY, EPMG MOVE LARGE MILITARY CONVOYS ALONG ROAD AS FAR NORTH AS MAKELLE WITH LITTLE DIFFICULTY. TPLF AND ETHIOPIAN PEOPLES' REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (EPRP) INSURGENTS STILL RECEIVING TRAINING FROM ERITREAN GROUPS WITH TRAINING BEING CONDUCTED IN ERITREA AND PROBABLY TO LESSER EXTENT IN MOUNTAINOUS TIGRE COUNTRYSIDE.

C. GONDAR - BEGEMDI AND SIMIEN PROVINCE, RENAMED GONDAR, WITNESSED SIGNIFICANT UPSURGE OF INSURGENT ACTIVITIES AT BEGINNING OF YEAR. ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (EDU) FORCES OVERRAN EPMG GARRISONS

AT METEMMA AND HUMERA ON SUDANESE BORDER AND CAPTURED
LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMS AND RESALEABLE COMMODITIES.
THIS FIRST DEMONSTRATION OF ANY SIGNIFICANT EDU MILI-
TARY CAPABILITY. WHILE LOW-LEVEL EDU ATTACKS WERE
REPORTED ALONG EAST-WEST GONDAR-METEMMA ROAD AND
NORTH-SOUTH GODAR-DEBARK ROAD DURING MARCH AND APRIL,
EDU FORCES PROVED INCAPABLE OF WERSTING CONTROL OF
ANY OTHER MAJOR TOWN FROM EPMG. IN EARLY MAY, EPMG
BEGAN SUCCESSFULLY MOVING SIGNIFICANT MILITARY CON-
VOYS, INCLUDING ARMOR AND 155MM SELF-PROPELLED ARTIL-
LERY PIECES, TO GONDAR FOR COUNTER-OFFENSIVE. EPMG
FORCES RECAPTURED HUMERA WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT OPPOS-
ITION IN EARLY JUNE. GODAR TOWN AREA HAS BEEN QUIET
PAST TWO MONTHS, EXCEPT FOR OCCASIONAL ASSASSINATIONS
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OF FEW PRO-GOVERNMENT TOWNSPEOPLE. RESIDENT SUDANESE
DIPLOMAT REPORTED EPMG HAS BEEN ABLE TO MOVE TROOPS
ALONG NORTH-SOUTH ROAD AS FAR AS ERITREAN BORDER
SINCE MID-MAY. INCREASINGLY SERIOUS INSURGENT PROB-
LEM IN GONDAR DURING FIRST THREE MONTHS OF YEAR HAS
BEEN CONTAINED BY EPMG WITH RELATIVELY SMALL LOSS
OF COMMITTED MILITARY RESOURCES. MOREOVER, THERE APPEARS
TO BE NO OBSTACLE TO RECAPTURE OF METEMMA IN NEAR
FUTURE. WHILE INITIAL INSURGENCIES REPORTEDLY CAUSED
SOME DISRUPTION OF ANSAR CAMPS IN PROVINCE, THIS
ALSO APPEARS RESOLVED FOR MOMENT.

2. COMMENTS TO FOLLOW BY SEPTTEL.
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